

Introduction by
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Chair FPTPECC, former Prime Minister

Mr the President of the Government of New Caledonia,
Mr the High Commissioner,
dear participants,
ladies and gentlemen.

It is a great pleasure for me to be here today in my capacity of
Chair of the France Pacific Territories Committee for the Pacific
Economic Cooperation Council to open the second seminar on
“Water Management in Islands, Coastal and Isolated areas”.

This PECC international project initiated by our national
Committee, in cooperation with the World Water Council, has
received a large support by PECC Members economies that have an
extended coastal territory and are being confronted with issues related
to water quality or water scarcity.

The growing demand for water has become one of the most
pregnant environmental issues worldwide today; issues related to
access to natural sources of water are not limited to PECC economies
but PECC has a major role to play in addressing these issues given its
transpacific membership.

All users, being private, industrial, agricultural, are confronted
with the need to move towards more efficient and more secured water
consumption worldwide.

Water related crisis commands attention; conflicts may arise
between competing use of water, raising questions about rights to
access to water, its economic value, and priorities for its use.

It is necessary to protect the resource and to look forward to
maintaining it at a sufficient level by developing and making
acceptable by users new technologies such as the reuse of water,

rainwater harvesting, desalination and by developing sound environmental practices at an economically acceptable cost.

An appropriate management of water in islands, coastal regions, interactions between fresh and salt water, preservation of water quality for private and recreational use are issues that are considered more and more important.

Several International and National Organisations, Research Centers, as well as private companies, have started to cooperate on water management issues in Island Territories and Coastal Regions with PECC and the World Water Forum on the occasion of the first seminar held in Bora- Bora in November 2007. This first seminar has created a momentum that I am confident will continue here in Nouméa.

You all know my continuous involvement in water issues, it explains why I am so pleased to be here with you today to share our common experience. My involvement starts:

- Firstly, when back in 64, I have launched the water agencies and set the sanitation taxes. Later on, as Prime Minister I strengthened this approach.
- more recently as Member of the EU Parliament when I have participated in the discussion of the European Union Directive on Water;
- finally as Member, since it was created in 2005, of the Resources Network, a think tank on access to water and sanitation in emerging countries which involves key figures of the world NGOs, academics, and politics as well as professional operators and international institutions

The resources Network is committed to:

- promoting the right to water and finding a legal framework for establishing its use internationally
- putting in place a benchmark for improved handling of the application of decentralized policies for access to water and sanitation.

- informing and educating those in both the northern and southern hemisphere to make them aware of their responsibilities in managing and sharing water resource.

I wanted to stress the action of the Network because our work in PECC, in cooperation with the World Water Forum, is closely related to it and I am confident that the development of such initiatives will allow to give a positive and multilateral answer to the issues of access to water and sanitation.

2008 is the year of sanitation, several presentations in this seminar are dedicated to water sanitation. I sincerely hope that we will be able at the end of our work to make proposals that will be translated into Guidelines to be presented at the next World Water Forum in March of 2009.

We already have some preliminary conclusions that have been identified at the Bora- Bora seminar:

- 1) The need for a better integrated management of the resource with a better awareness : some entire regions in the World are offtracks, not only in the PECC economies; therefore special care is requested in regions constrained by their fragility, vulnerability and limited human and financial resource base.
- 2) The need for a better governance: water crisis is a deficiency of water governance: water governance deserves bringing together our forces to provide an adapted response to water shortage and water quality. There are rights and interests linked to cultural and traditional structures within communities, effective partnership between all stakeholders must prevail:
We need to build trust between all stakeholders.
- 3) Look for possible responses to issues arising from conflict against water use: competition between users is increasing in intensity.

- 4) Avenues for limiting water scarcity and promoting access to clean water: developing sanitation will permit to limit scarcity and tension as well as the development of “sanitary bombs” that could strike urban areas.
- 5) Acknowledging scarcity also means that we must aim at introducing mechanisms for a better management of the resource. In particular, pricing policies should better reflect the scarcity value of water and discourage overusing water resource.
- 6) Reach all consumers for allowing access to water and sanitation to all.

Ladies and gentlemen, an extensive task is still in front of us if we want to contribute to a better access to clean water and sanitation. This second seminar on *Water Management in Islands, Coastal and Isolated Areas* will contribute, I am sure, to develop new thinking and proposals in addition to those I have just mentioned.

I will have the heavy task to chair the final session of our work where proposals will be made by the sessions Chairs. I strongly encourage each of them to come with elaborated proposals, from the presentations and follow-up discussions, which will be transmitted as a contribution of PECC to the work of the fifth World Water Forum in Istanbul, 16-22 March 2009.

I wish you all the best for our work.